GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2470
ANSWERED ON:05.12.2000
POISONOUS COTTON SEEDS
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Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware that BT cotton seeds of M/s Monsanto company, which preparesgenetic engineer seeds has been found poisonous according to a research conducted in London;

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;

(c) whether the Government have investigated the effect/ill-effects of this seed;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) if not, the reasons therefor;

(f) whether the Government propose to impose ban on the use of said seed on the line of European countries;
(g) if so, by when it is likely to be banned; and
(h) if not, the reasons therefor ?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT)

(a)&(b): Sir; only one type of Bt. cotton seed of M/s. Monsanto company has been introduced in commercial agriculture in the world having the Cry1A(c) gene. This protein is poisonous only to the target lepidopteran pests commonly known as the bollworm of cotton. The protein is harmless to human, animals and other non target species. We are not aware of any peer-reviewed studies conducted in the U. K. which question the safety of Bt. cotton seeds. Regulatory authorities in USA, Australia, Mexico, Argentina, Spain,Canada, Japan, China, Indonesia and South Africa have reviewed the extensive safety assessment studies conducted on the Bt. cotton seed of M/s. Monsanto and have concluded that Bt. cotton and cotton seed pose no food, feed and environmental safety concerns.

(c), (d) & (e): The Government had investigated the safety of Bt. cotton seeds. The safety study was conducted at Industrial Toxicological Research Centre (ITRC), Lucknow, a Government funded institution, on goats. The results indicated that Indian Bt. cotton seeds have no ill-effects on goats. Further safety studies on lactating cows,lactating water buffalo, poultry and fish are also being carried out.

(f), (g) &(h): After the full evaluation of safety of Bt. cotton is completed, the commercial release would be considered. However, the countries namely USA, Australia, Mexico, Argentina, China and South Africa have adopted Bt. cotton having Cry1A(c) gene for commercial cultivation.